SONGS OF LI-TAI-PÉ

This Edition is limited to 200 copies of which 175 copies are for sale.

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Songs of Li-Tai-Pè

from the

"CANCIONERIO CHINES"

OF ANTONIO CASTRO FEIJO

An Interpretation from the Portuguese by

JORDAN HERBERT STABLER

". . . quelques extraits de ce délicat LIVRE DE JADE *dont l'exotique parfum de ginseng et de thé se mêle à l'odorante fraîcheur de l'eau qui babille, sous un clair de lune, tout le long du livre."*

I.-K. HUYSMANS, "À REBOURS."

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By the same Translator

The Jargon of Master François Villon

1918

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To E. H. W. S.

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED

❦

"As limpidas cançoes que me inspiraste,
Ao som da flauto d'ebano cantadas."

Introduction

"O Cancioneiro Chines"
(The Book of Chinese Songs)

CHINA is the land of lyric verse. The Western World is but little acquainted with the grace, delicacy, and simplicity of the Chinese lyric,—particularly little acquainted with the lyrics of the great poets of the Tang dynasty, who had such a marvelous faculty of producing the greatest effect with the lightest touch. These poets—artists, we should call them—traced images so simple; they brought into being a fantasy, flexible and lucid as the bluish depths of water seen in a cup of transparent "blanc de chine."

The true artist will search for the highest expression in art and poetry throughout the entire world, without regard for its nationality or origin. A greater interchange of thought than ever before is now occupying the minds of the cultured of the Eastern and Western worlds. If the man of letters in Pekin makes a close study of our most eminent writers, past and present, may we not enjoy and marvel at the masterpieces of Chinese literature and at the rare charm of the poems of the great Li-Tai-Pé?

Through the verses of Li-Tai-Pé and of Thu-Fu and through those of their colleagues runs one dominant theme: the worship of the beautiful, particularly the beautiful in nature. In artistic, romantic metaphor the lyrics of China are almost unequalled and the poets people their verses with quaint and delicate creatures of a land of dreams—gliding, unreal visions which are the more beautiful because of their unreality.

As we have not that tenacity of purpose and that unrelenting energy of the Oriental, which enable him to become proficient in the Western languages and as there are very few of us who have the aptitude or the opportunity to undertake the careful study of Chinese, we must seek our knowledge of the Chinese Classics in

the various translations and interpretations, which have been produced from time to time in the different Western languages. Such a work is "O Cancioneiro Chines" of Antonio Castro Feijo.

* * * * * *

Antonio Castro Feijo—scholar, diplomat and one of Portugal's foremost lyric poets, is, alas, no more. But in his contributions to the literature of his country he has left behind him an enduring monument.

A master of simple lyric verse, who sang of nature and whose love poems contain the very essence of that extraordinary Portuguese word, "Saudade." There is no adequate English translation of this word but its meaning can perhaps be conveyed by reference to that undefined, dull contentment, which is sometimes the aftermath of the acute sorrows and pains of this World,—bitter-sweet memories of love unrequited, of cherished friends left behind or of favorite abiding places forsaken.

It was my great privilege to be among the younger colleagues of Antonio Feijo in Stockholm, where he occupied the post of Portuguese Minister for many years: a great honor also to have had two years of close association with a master—a master of diplomacy and of literature—who was kindness itself in imparting to others something useful from his abundant storehouse of information.

Castro Feijo, the diplomat, and Castro Feijo, the poet, were two most distinct persons. The shrewd diplomat of the old regime, clever internationalist, with a quarter of a century of experience of the drift of European politics—well versed in protocol and diplomatic usage, punctilious to a degree—hid the carefree, gentle soul of a true artist only revealed to those in whom he encountered the necessary sympathy.

It was both an honor and a pleasure for me to accompany Castro Feijo often on his rambles through Stockholm—in the face of a gale from the Baltic or on brilliant Swedish summer days—when he would discourse of men and things and far-off lands and explain the philosophy and mysticism of his own poems. One afternoon I had gone to the Legation to hear some of his sonnets, just finished for the work he then had in contemplation, and to enjoy with him a cup or two of the port of Portugal, known only to the Portuguese—"O vinho ricamente fabricado"—as the Poet himself sings.

High in one of the large buildings in Drottingsgatan, the Legation windows overlooked all Stockholm and a goodly part of

the Archipelago—but inside there was a bit of the Iberian Peninsular; quaint Portuguese stuffs, old silver chalices and crucifixes, old Church paintings of much merit and a unique collection of Church vestments for the children, who took part in the Religious Processions of the Middle Ages: a most proper setting for the discussion of Portuguese verse.

The reading of his poems finished, the Poet turned to me, and knowing that I was then engaged on the translation of some 15th Century French verse, asked me if I would not make an attempt at rendering into English of some of the poems from his favorite work "O Cancioneiro Chines."

Nine years have gone by since that afternoon in the old-world atmosphere of the Portuguese Legation in Drottingsgatan: the Master is dead, the War has passed over all the world with its black clouds when all thoughts of the gentler side of life were forced to one side; but now I venture to offer in affectionate memory of my friend and master, an attempt at a translation or rather an interpretation of those poems in the "Book of Chinese Songs" of which Castro Feijo himself was most fond.

* * * * * *

"O Cancioneiro Chines" of Castro Feijo needs a certain amount of explanation. When it appeared in Lisbon in 1890 it aroused a great deal of interest. Its author was well known. He had already published two of his most notable works, "Transfigurações" and "Lyricas e Bucolicas," but the "Book of Chinese Songs" was so different and so strange to the Portuguese mind, that many conflicting theories were advanced as to how it was written and from what sources derived. The various articles which appeared in the Lisbon Press at the time of the publication of the book, give an excellent idea of the interest in both the man and his work and I quote herewith a translation from one of them:

"Antonio Feijo, that most distinguished Consular and Diplomatic Officer, who is also endowed with an extraordinary gift as a lyric poet, sent us as his P. P. C. card, upon his departure for his new post at Stockholm, a new book of verse. Nothing could be more gracious or more subtly diplomatic—to substitute for the banal visiting card, a packet of delightful jewels, which he alone knows how to polish to their highest brilliancy.

"After an hour's incomparable pleasure, which the reading of these verses gives us, we feel our heart beat even more warmly for this delightful artist and our being filled with 'saudade' at the thought of his departure.

"The 'Book of Chinese Songs' as the collection is called is a compilation of verses from 'Le Livre de Jade,' through which, as Huysmans says, 'the exotic perfume of Ginseng and of Tea mingles with the freshness of running water silvered by the rays of the full Moon.'"

As the foregoing article states, Feijo's "Cancioneiro" is an adaptation into Portuguese verse of Judith Gauthier's "Livre de Jade," and in fact, that work in prose was used as the principal basis. He has often told me, however, that during the six years in which he was engaged on his book, he read greatly in French and Portuguese in connection with Chinese literature and made a careful study of the works of the Jesuit missionary fathers, "Les Livres des Pères Jesuits." In these works there is an extensive section devoted to the Chinese Poets, notably to those of the famous Tang dynasty such as Li-Tai-Pé (705-762 A.D.), who was known as the "Banished Angel," so heavenly were his poems which, we are told, he dashed off when in his cups. In "Les Parfums de la Pagoda" Judith Gauthier informs us: "Le poet Li-Tai-Pé est mort de la Lune." Did his passing occur in this wise as her friend the Mandarin avers?: One night, at full-moon, in the fairy gardens of the Emperor at Tchan-Ngan, the ancient capital, in the midst of a magnificent fête, the Poet was drifting over the lake with several boon companions in a small skiff and after drinking many toasts to the Emperor and to the Immortals, he leaned over the side of the boat as if making an attempt to embrace the reflection of the moon in the waters, and drank the following toast: "In the unknown spaces there is neither height nor depth; I drink to you, O Moon, who calls me and who makes me understand that to reach the other World, it matters little if one mounts or descends." A harmonious voice immediately was heard in answer, a crest of white foam appeared on the surface of the Lake and from its midst bearing standards rose two youthful Immortals sent by the Lord of the Skies to invite the poet to take his place in the celestial regions: a Dolphin then appeared upon which Li-Tai-Pé placed himself and, preceded by the heavenly cortege, slowly advanced until engulfed in the lake at the spot where the Moon's image silvered the waters, and disappeared forever."

The "Cancioneiro Chines" may be termed a reconstruction—yet Feijo has so identified himself with the very nature of the Oriental poetry he interprets, that his verses appear as fresh as the originals. He has succeeded in following the three canons of the Tang Poets—lucidity, simplicity and eloquence—with the result that he has reproduced with exactness the spirit of the masterpieces.

The author of "Le Livre de Jade," Judith Gauthier, was well prepared for her task. Tradition relates that Theophile, her

father, an irresponsible Bohemian who, separated from his wife and having his daughter under his care, had utterly forgotten about her education. One cold winter's day, when Theophile was rambling along the Champs Elysées with his daughter, then ten years old, a shivering and very decrepit Oriental asked him for alms. Conversation then ensued. The Oriental showed a deep knowledge of cultivated French, questions were asked and it was found that the beggar was a Chinese philosopher fallen upon evil days, a man of rare learning and deep knowledge of the Classics.

Gauthier in a burst of enthusiasm, remembering that the education of his daughter was being neglected and that a tutor was lacking, conceived the brilliant idea of providing for the case on the spot and engaged the horn spectacled Sage as his daughter's mentor.

Years passed; the Sage continued to instruct his apt pupil until Mme. Walther, the erstwhile small untutored Judith Gauthier had become one of the greatest living authorities on Chinese literature in Europe.

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Chinese pottery and porcelains have kept pace with Chinese literary creations throughout the ages. The pottery cups and jars of the Tang and Sung dynasties, the mortuary figures of men and animals have the same simplicity as the existing examples of the literary efforts in the reigns of the early Kings.

While the crudeness of the early days disappeared little by little until the Golden Age of Chinese poetry was reached in the Tang dynasty by Li-Tai-Pé and Thu-Fu and some of their contemporaries, the strength and simplicity still remained but coupled with a most delicate touch.

The Blanc de Chine, Sang de Boeuf, the Celaydon, the Blue and White and the Five Colored Ming pieces, so clear in color and refreshing in shape, though later in period, may be considered as plastic examples of what many of the poems of the "Cancioneiro Chines" portray in verse. The figures so delicately painted on some of the Five Colored Ming vases seem true illustrations of the scenes described by the Poets.

Chinese Art, with its porcelains, its bronzes, heroic paintings, Coromandel screens and hard stone carvings, has become more and more known to the Western World during the past three or more decades. While many cultivated Europeans have become connoisseurs in one branch of this art or another, Chinese literature is not so well known. Although there have been a certain number of translations in prose and verse of the Classic poets,

the productions of the great Masters are not as well known as are those of the great Artists.

To the lovers of "Chinoiserie," in the best sense of the term, to those who are interested in the best that the Extreme Orient has produced, I trust that my attempt at an interpretation of some of the masterpieces of the great poets, will appeal. An interpretation arrived at by a most roundabout way, I confess, and one much open to criticism, it is true. But roundabout as it is, to me the work of translating Feijo's poems has been a labor of cherished memories and has had for me a double purpose, namely, to try to give to the English speaking world a rough sketch of the great talent of Antonio Feijo and also to place before those lovers of Chinese Art in its broadest scope another rendering of some of the poems of the great masters of Chinese lyric verse.

An early Ming wine cup, of egg shell, transparent, Blanc de Chine is on my table close at hand as I write—a cup out of which Thu-Fu himself would not have been loath to drink his toast to the Immortal Sages. My task is over. I have tried to do justice in my humble way to the Master—and as I collect my scattered sheets of notes, I fill the cup with the "wine of the Portuguese" and empty it in a silent toast to the olden day Poets of that far away Civilization and to Antonio Feijo, their exponent in modern days.

"His House with Cups is furnished,
Those Cups whose praise I sing,
To drink the glory of the Poets,
And to celebrate Ta-Ming."

—From "Wine with Thu-Fu."

J. H. S.

The original edition of the "Cancioneiro Chines" has a preface in French by the famous Chinese General Tcheng-Ki-Tong, a literateur of no mean merit both in his own language and in that of his adoption. He was the author of the romance "L'homme jaune" and other works. I take the liberty of setting forth herewith a translation of this preface in which he gives high praise to the "Livre de Jade" and makes certain reflections upon Chinese verse:

"It is the custom in China, when one wishes to describe an article of great rarity and value, to compare it to Jade. The title alone 'The Book of Jade' is therefore to the cultivated Chinese, a promise of excellence and will prevent even the most daring critic from doubting the value of such a work: it is perfect from cover to cover—or at least should be. There exist few authors who may claim for themselves so easily gained notoriety and the lettered public will not be loath to share this view. Posterity alone will present the glorious oak leaves which crown the true masterpieces and no one will dare to contradict its judgment.

"The 'Book of Jade' is such a masterpiece. It is an anthology composed of verses by our poets, who have received the title of 'Tsai-Tseu,' that is to say, genius, and have become worthy of the admiration of all of the cultured in the entire world.

"In reading this delightful book, I have come across many poems of our great poets such as Le-Tai-Pé and Thu-Fu, who have received the just title of the real reformers of Chinese poetry. They lived in the 8th century in the Tang dynasty and have left undying works. The reader should scan the verses of these poets, above all others, if he wishes to understand the inspiration and true meaning of our poetry.

"The Ancients, as well in China as in other places, had the facility of expressing in a simple manner, thoughts which modern writers cannot render with the same happy turn of phrase. Simplicity is the perfection, which the cultured seek with the greatest care; but it often happens, alas! that their efforts are fruitless. To arrive at this perfection one must have a deep feeling for Nature engraved on the soul and it is a deep knowledge of Nature alone which teaches this process.

"Poetry is the first language of Humanity. In China the most ancient writings were in verse. One may go so far as to say that the first lessons were taught in poetry in order to make them more agreeable. It is said that even our lawmakers adopted the idea of using verse for their codes, but however difficult to credit this may be, I am convinced that our early ancestors only had knowledge of the poetic form.

"This view has a most pleasing side. The ancients were in more intimate communion with nature; they had a freer soul;

less stilted; they were more virile in the psychological sense of the word; they were closer to the soil than we moderns. It is quite evident that the lyric sense decreases in proportion as humanity grows older; simplicity becomes more envolved; thoughts become more difficult to express; new fashions are adopted which make magnificent costumes, but which veil graceful and noble forms, and it is in fact grace and nobility which are the particular attributes of our most ancient poetry.

"Our poems, particularly the Odes, are very difficult to translate and it is truly an arduous task to undertake such a work. However, these attempts, no matter how perilous they may be, should be encouraged, and for my part I can only congratulate those poets who have had the generous idea to translate the most esteemed works of their colleagues of the Far East.

"The period in which we live is eager for the unknown. The new is its charm. Embarrassed by its old ideas, of which it is also weaned, it wishes new horizons, new peoples, new empires, new ideas. There is everywhere a fever of expectancy: some seek immense territories to found empires; others exploit mines which yield gold in profusion; these dream of glory, those of commerce: all have a definite program and ambitions more often than not at variance but which show the ardor of their desires and their determination of purpose. Everything is possible in this form of ideals.

"The exportation and importation of the poetry of two great Civilizations is an effective means of cementing understanding and friendship. It is one of the noblest of exchanges. The ancient Poets making the tour of the modern World and reconciling the most susceptible minds, is not that an unexpected novelty, one full of unforeseen charm and delightful promise? To be brief, Poetry is harmony and between Harmony and Peace there is but a slight shade of difference."

GENERAL TCHENG-KI-TONG.

DEDICATION TO LYRIC VERSE

by

LI-TAI-PÉ

CHA-TANG'S stately barge, long oars extended,
Flute players piping of love laden Song,
Cups of rare vintage anciently blended,
I oft drain to Pleasure . . . drifting along.

In the Heavens the Gods wait my coming,
Quaint rhymes I have fashioned they wish to own,
Earthborn and Happy, I'll leave protesting
These shores whence the Sea Gulls have flown.

Songs, Odes and Poems are everlasting,
Alone are eternal and reach to a Height,
But you massive Towers so strongly fashioned,
Kiosks and Pagodas, are ruins ere Night.

In a moment of frenzy, impassioned,
Of the Five Sacred Hills my brush writes the praise,
Do Honour, Riches and Power outdistance,
The Poem which lives to the end of all Days,

Nay; ere such a great Transmutation,
Ere such a great change in Life's course,
The Great Yellow River flung back by Boulders,
In a crest of white Foam would recede to its Source.

SPRING

THE MYSTIC FLUTE

Li-Tai-Pé

WAFTED into my Garden,
On a gentle Summer Breeze,
Came the sound of a Flute, mysterious,
From a distant grove of Trees.

On the Moment's inspiration,
A Willow Flute I made,
And in minor Notes accompanied,
The Tune which was being played.

At Night in my Garden quiet,
The Chorus of drowsy Birds,
Re-sung the duet of the Morning,
And taught me its mystic Words.

THE FISHERMAN

Li-Tai-Pé

ON the Hills, the Snows have melted,
The Prune Trees are a-bloom,
Sun-gilded are the Willows,
The Lake a silver Loom.

Comes an Hour, half sad, half sacred,
The Humming Birds flutter by,
Giving the Lips of the Flowers,
A tender Caress as they fly.

In the distance, his Skiff not moving,
The Fisherman, sunbronzed and tall,
Breaks the Lake's silver surface,
As he draws in his Net with its haul.

High in her nest the Swallow,
Awaits the return of her Mate,
So I picture the Fishermen's loved one,
In her Cabin, the Hour grows late.

He steadfastly thinks of her, waiting,
The thought gives him Strength in his Toil,
The Swallow goes back to his tree top,
The Fisherman home with his Spoil.

THE WILLOW LEAF

Tchan-Tiu-Lin

I love a slender Maiden fair,
  Who by her Window seems to dream.
Not for her lacquered House I care,
  Built by the Yellow River's stream,
    I love her for the Leaf she cast,
    Into the Lake as I sailed by.

I love the Eastern Breeze which blows,
  Not that it bears a Fragrance fresh and sweet,
Of Peach Trees, where the River flows,
  And Perfumes on the Mountain meet.
    I love it for the Leaf, which comes
    Blown to my Boat upon the Lake.

I love the Leaf, not that it brings,
  The early Spring which soon must dawn,
But for a Name she sometimes sings,
  Which she upon the Leaf has drawn,
    With golden broidery needle Point
    And this Name . . . it is mine.

PEARLS OF JADE

Tchan-Tiu-Lin

I saw ride by, close to the Spot I stood,
Within the flower bordered Way,
Lo-Wang-Lee, the Mandarin's Wife,
Triumphant, radiant as the Day.

When she upon her Horse sped by,
Close to the Lake, the white Moonbeams
Silvered the Willow's rustling Leaves,
And made the place a land of Dreams.

But from her Bosom dropt like Stars,
Her Pearls of Jade, a dazzling string, . . .
. . . Sometime a passer-by, these Pearls
Will find, and of his Fortune sing:

But I . . . saw naught but her bright face
Touched by the Moonbeams as the Willow tree,
And bore away her Image in my Heart,
Her Pearls of Jade . . . are naught to me.

THE ORANGE BLOSSOM'S SHADE

Tin-Tun-Ling

THIS tender Maid, who all her days,
Within her Father's House kept fast,
First hears the Mystic Flute which plays,
Far off, comes closer then goes past.

And in the Music faintly heard,
She seems to sense the distant Song,
Deep as some full throated Bird,
Of One who must be young and strong.

Then through her lacquered Window blinds
Which guard her Chamber from the West,
The Orange Blossom's shadow finds
Its way to touch her virgin Breast.

And blushing red as coral Peach,
She hears the Notes now up, now down,
And dreams that someone's unseen Hand,
Soft pulls apart her silken Gown.

PEACH BLOOM

Tse-Tie

AS a Lover's pledge, I sent
A flowering Peach Bloom spray,
To One who has carmine Lips
And a face like the dawn of Day.

And as a Token of my Desire,
A timid Swallow I bestow,
Whose gentle Wings are curved,
The way her Eyebrows grow.

The Peach Bloom Spray must fade
The Swallow fly a-far,
Back to the Sacred Hills,
Where the Eight Immortals are.

But her coral Lips, red as the Flowers,
Will keep their red I pray,
And her Eyebrows curved as
The Swallow's Wings will never fly away.

SUMMER

THE STAIRWAY OF JADE

Li-Tai-Pé

THE youthful Empress slowly mounts,
While the Lanterns dim and fade,
In the Full Moon's dazzling Light,
The great Stairway of Jade.

Its Steps lightly kiss as she passes,
The Fringe of her Robe, which is made,
Of green Brocade, half celestial,
The hue of Imperial Jade.

In the sacred depths of her Chamber,
The truant Moonbeams invade,
A languorous Passion engulfs her,
A mystic enchantment of Jade.

She sees through her latticed Window,
The Stars with Diamonds inlaid,
Sway in Celestial Dances,
In a Heavenly Palace of Jade.

THE SAGES DANCE

Li-Tai-Pé

ON a Willow Flute I played a Tune,
To those who passed me by,
But no one heard or gave me heed,
And I wondered why?

Then throwing the Flute away,
I sung to the Gods on High,
The Immortal Sages showed their Joy,
As they danced in the Clouds in the Sky.

And now World-weary Mortals,
Listen when sung and played,
Are my songs which are accompanied,
By a Mystic Flute of Jade.

THE FAREWELL

Roa-Li

A Mandarin's Robe, dragon broidered,
A Token, the silk stained with tears,
The Warrior's Wife gives at parting,
And whispers, her Eyes dimmed with Tears:

"Wear this Pledge into Battle,
In its fabric is woven my Name.
Return ere my Heart breaks with longing.
Return ere extinct is Life's Flame."

"As the Full Moon at its waning,
Each Hour its Splendor grows pale,
So with me my Lover departed,
My Beauty each moment must fail."

THE FAN

Tan-Jo-Su

THE young Bride woke at break of Day,
In her silken panelled Room,
From her silken Couch, where the Bridegroom lay,
She crept through the dawning Gloom.

Close and still the summer Morn,
Her lacquered Fan she sought,
On its shining Surface was quaintly drawn,
This Devise, which her notice caught:

"In the heat of the Summer all seek me,
All keep me close at their side.
But when Winter comes with its Rigors,
I'm forgotten and cast aside."

A sudden Sadness filled her Heart,
As these simple Words she read,
An unseen Hand seemed to draw her apart,
From her Lover, a secret Dread.

"My Beloved is young," she whispered,
"His youthful Love I enflame,
With the Love I give him unstinted,
Will his Love continue the same?"

"Will his Love remain unforgotten,
When his youthful Fancies subside,
As the Fan will I be forgotten,
Shall I also be cast aside?"

MOONBEAMS

Li-Su-Tchon

THE Sea is a golden Disk of Bronze,
The Full Moon crests the Hill,
Our Barque drifts with the Current,
Our Crystal Cups we fill.

The Clouds which the Moonbeams silver,
Take Shapes as they pass on High,
Some call them the Wives of the Emperor,
Languidly rustling by.

Languid and half awakened,
In their Robes of Silk and Gold,
But we call them the Mystic Cygnets,
Of the Romances of Old.

THE EMPEROR

Thu-Fu

THE Emperor is seated in Splendor,
On his Jewel encrusted Throne,
The Mandarins stand in a Circle,
Like the Sun he shines forth alone.

The Son of Heaven scarce listens,
To the weighty Questions of State,
Which his Mandarins are propounding,
He looks past the jeweled Gate.

In her carven Jade Pagoda,
The Empress her Maidens surround,
Her flower Face pale as the Lily,
Sits still scarce making a Sound.

She thinks of her youthful Husband,
And murmuring seems to say,
As the Breeze blows through her Chamber,
"The Emperor tarries to-day."

And braving the solemn Council,
The perfume laden Breeze,
Caresses the cheek of the Emperor,
And her flower Face he sees.

The Son of Heaven whispers,
"From my Love is this Fragrance blown,"
And he strides to the Jade Pagoda,
Forgetting both State and Throne.

AUTUMN

THE PORCELAIN PAGODA

Li-Tai-Pé

LIKE the curving back of a Tiger,
The Bridge leads from the Shore,
To where the tiled Pagoda,
In the Lake was builded of yore.

Various Boon Companions,
In the tiled Pagoda are found,
Of satin and silk their Garments,
They pass the Wine Cup around.

Verses and Rhymes combining,
Their merry Jests are exchanged,
And forgetful of Rites ceremonious,
Head-dress and Robe are deranged.

The Lake is a silver Mirror,
Reflecting the Shore and the Trees,
A crescent Moon the Bridge of Jade,
The Boon Companions, one sees:

Raising their brimming Wine Cups
In a Pagoda turned upside down,
Their silken Robes out-flowing,
Their Heads just touching the Ground.

AUTUMN LEAVES

Thu-Fu

ONCE more the Rain comes falling
From the black swathed Autumn Sky,
Which mourns bright days departed,
And the Summer's warmth gone by.

But this is the proper Hour
To indite on our parchment Scrolls,
All those melodious Verses,
Which Summer has born to our Souls.

As the Wine Cup our Spirit quickens,
And sadness must depart . . .
So my Brushes, dry and dusty
Dipped in Ink again take Heart.

And swiftly over the Pages,
They fly, not forgetting a Thought.
For Time, like Smoke and the Swallows
Once gone can never be caught.

ON THE RIVER TCHU

Thu-Fu

MY Barque glides softly with the Stream,
Upon the River Tchu,
The murmuring Current brings a Dream,
The Willows drip with Dew.

Star-studded Skies the Waters light,
A Cloud drifts into view,
And as the Full Moon veils her Face,
The World is turned to blue.

And phantom Shadows seem to pass,
Fantastic through my Mind,
And Pictures of the Days of Old,
Upon the Cloud I find.

The murmuring Current brings a Dream,
The Willows drip with Dew,
My Barque glides softly with the Stream,
Upon the River Tchu.

THE EXILE

Su-Tong-Po

YOUTH is careless and merry,
On a lighthearted Way it goes,
Youth always wears as its Token,
Jade Green or Color of Rose.

The Fields in the Springtime glisten,
As the Sun dispells the Gloom,
The Orchards and Gardens flower,
The Peach Tree is in bloom.

But Youth and Spring have forsaken
The Exile who roams afar,
Of sombre hue his Garments,
His friend but a lonely Star.

THE HOUSE IN HER HEART

Thu-Fu

DESTROYED was my House by a Fire,
The House in which I was born.
To forget was my only desire,
I wandered sad and forlorn.

To the Moon an ode I fashioned,
And on my Flute played a Tune,
But instead of being impassioned,
A Cloud veiled the face of the Moon.

To the Mountains then I betook me,
But their faces forbidding and cold,
Made all of cheerfulness leave me,
And my Sorrows returned as of old.

To the Sea I then turned, unrequited,
To end all my Sorrows, dismayed,
When from a Boat dimly lighted,
There shone forth the Face of a Maid.

This Vision was so unexpected,
That I thought, so heavy my Care,
It was only the Moonbeam reflected,
Which would soon fade through the Air.

From my stupor I woke half unwilling,
(Our Boats were not far apart),
And I knew that if she were willing,
I could re-build my House in her Heart.

THE MANDARIN'S WIVES

Sao-Nan

FIRST WIFE

bring Wine in the Cup, sweet as Honey,
And a Dish of tender Doves,
To the Mandarin, I, the most faithful
The First of all his Loves.

SECOND WIFE

I bring Wine in the Cup, of Gold-Color,
And a Dish with Spices done,
To the Mandarin what are the Others?
I alone bore him a Son.

THIRD WIFE

I bring Wine in the Cup, full of ardour,
Of the Dishes what shall I say?
To the Mandarin there is no difference
He wishes a new Love each Day!

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WINTER

THE LONELY INN

Li-Tai-Pé

LIMPING, I came to an Inn
And stopped to repose on the Way.
Through my Chamber's broken casement
Came Moonbeams bright as the Day.

I dreamed midst all this Splendor,
Of the Joy of the Days of Old.
But awoke with a fright still unrested,
To find all Snow covered and Cold.

My wearied Eyes I directed,
My Eyes so burned with Pain,
To the Moon still relentlessly shining,
And knew I must wander again.

My wearied Head fell forward,
I thought of my Friends far away,
And wept for my Country abandoned,
But I took to the Road before Day.

THE SHIVERING POET ADDRESSES THE SUN

Thu-Fu

I see the dry Leaves falling
As the cruel South Winds blow,
And ever I watch them thinking,
That I see them come and go.

Into my Heart creeps a Shadow,
A Shadow such as is cast
By the tall Mountains engulfing
The Valleys, when Sunset is past.

Winter blasts cold and cruel,
Turn all the Streams to white Jade,
But one ray of Sunshine in Summer,
Brings forth a gushing Cascade.

When Summer returns I shall hie me,
To the tallest Peak I can find,
So that you, O Sun, may thaw me,
With your Smile so warm and kind.

WINE WITH THU-FU

Tsui-Tche-Tsi

WITH Wine, rich, old and precious,
Our Green Jade Cups he fills.
Is not this the Time for Drinking
For the Wind blows from the Hills?

Neath the steady Winter Showers,
Our Cups dispell our Sighs.
Drink Ye Immortal Sages,
To the blue Clouds of the Skies.

But the Sun has kissed the Valley,
And over is the Rain,
Fill up the emerald Goblets,
Drink Immortals, drink again.

His House with Cups is furnished,
Those Cups whose Praise I sing,
To drink the Glory of the Poets,
And to celebrate Ta-Ming!

THE POET LAUGHS AT NATURE

Thu-Fu

LIKE a brimming porcelain Cup,
Its waters crystal and cold,
The Lake stretches out before me,
And brings back the Legends of Old.

The slender Bamboos on its Borders,
Take shapes which astonish the Eye,
Fantastic they look like quaint Houses,
With Roofs which reach to the Sky.

Great Rocks from behind the Foliage,
Here and there raise a sharp pointed Head,
And resemble the Peaks of Pagodas,
Pagodas of Princes long dead.

Once Laughter came over the Water,
In his Skiff the Poet sailed by,
He laughed to think that Dame Nature,
Had copied Man's works on the sly.

THE SOLITARY CRANE

Su-Tong-Po

MOTIONLESS upon the River's brim,
The Crane at Nightfall stands
And meditating seems to read
Life's Book writ in the Sands.

Should some belated Passer-by
He notice with his dreamy eyes,
He slowly turns his Head and goes,
With Wings scarce moving as he flies.

And watching from behind protecting Leaves,
He waits until the Fields are his once more,
And slowly flies to watch again,
The River murmuring past the Shore.

Sometimes at Night, with o'er cast Sky
The struggling Moonbeam shows,
The melancholy dreamy Crane,
Still watching as the River flows.

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Thus Men whom some great Passions move,
Seek Solitude and meditating stand
Close to the River's brim and try
To read Love's Riddle in the Sand.

MIDSTREAM

Tchan-Ui

IN my tiny Skiff, which the quiet Stream
Sways gently upon its Breast,
The Days I pass, in a quiet Dream,
Till the Sunset gilds the West.

In the distance the Mountains tower,
Their Shadows fall from above,
I believe at this lonely Hour,
The Wine Cup my only Love.

The Wine Cup of Crystal fashioned,
Where the generous Wine overflows,
With Joy my Heart impassioned!
But such Joy quickly goes.

Sometimes my Heart is Weary,
My Soul is filled with Care,
But to-day the Mountains' shadows,
Fade through the Crystal Air.

THE END